

formerly represented Amtorg, the
soviet trading agency, on the Pacific
coast. At present he works with
Gebert in the Pittsburgh district.

George Powers, alias Morris Pow-
ers, former district organizer of the
communist party in South Carolina,
who is now a district director of the
Steel Workers Organization commit-
tee of the C. I. O. in Pittsburgh, at
large salary.

Jess Gonzales, Mexican, member of
the communist party and full time

salaried man on the S. W. O. C. in
Pittsburgh.

Eleanor Rye, colored, an organizer
for the National Negro congress, is
communist outfit, and on the private
pay roll of Van A. Bittner, Chicago
regional director of the C. I. O.

Clarence Irwin, district organizer
for the communist party, who is on
the S. W. O. C. pay roll in Pitts-
burgh.

Louis Majors, member of the com-
munist party and on the S. W. O. C.
pay roll in Pittsburgh.

Shane Steel Organizer.

Tom Shane, member of the com-
munist party and a full time C. I. O.
organizer on the steel workers' pay
roll in Pittsburgh.

Doyle Glormer, reporter for the
communist People's Press, who is on
the pay roll of the S. W. O. C.

Paul Glaser, attorney for the sec-
tion committee of the communist
party, who is a full salaried member
of the S. W. O. C. staff and spends
much time with Van Bittner in Chi-
cago.

Peter Chapa, for years a com-
munist organizer who is now a full
time S. W. O. C. organizer at Gary,
reporting directly to Van Bittner.

Ruth Chapa, wife of Peter Chapa,
paid by the S. W. O. C. to do mis-
sionary work in the homes of Span-
ish steel workers.

Alfredo Abillo, member of the com-
munist party at South Chicago and
a paid S. W. O. C. organizer among
Mexicans in that section.

Hansen, first name unknown, who
is a member of the communist party
at Chicago Heights and a full time
S. W. O. C. organizer.

Charles Henry, member of the com-
munist party and a part time S. W.
O. C. organizer in South Chicago.

Leonides McDonald, Negro com-
munist leader who is on the pay roll
of the S. W. O. C. at Indiana Harbor.

Mike Ostroski, member of the com-

munist party who is on the S. W. O. C.
pay roll in Gary.

George A. Patterson, member of
the communist party on the S. W.
O. C. pay roll in South Chicago.

Joe Cook, member of the communist
party and a part time S. W. O. C. or-
ganizer in South Chicago.

Dave Doran, Pittsburgh district or-
ganizer for the Young Communist
league, who is on the S. W. O. C. pay
roll and confers frequently with

Philip Murray. He is also a close
associate of William Z. Foster.

CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE

3-28-37

LABOR'S SCHOOLS

N. Y. Workers School Announces New 'Consultation Service'

NEW YORK, March 20. —

The organization of a "Consultation Service" was announced today by the New York Workers School. This service is intended as an aid for persons carrying on independent study through the answering of questions and the solving of difficult problems which have arisen in the course of self-study, and the giving of advice and information on methods and courses of study.

Anyone in any part of the country who in the course of self-study has come across a difficult point which requires further explanation, or has a question to be answered, may send the question to the school for answer. An authoritative answer will be sent by the school in return. Those who wish to embark on a course of self-study may also apply to the Consultation Service, whereupon they will receive outlines of study and additional necessary material, depending on the subject they wish to study. No fees will be charged by the Workers School for this service, but a self-addressed stamped envelope must accompany each inquiry. All letters are to be addressed to the Consultation Service, Workers School, 35 East 12th Street, New York City.

In announcing the establishment of this new department, the school declared that it is taking this further step along the road of furnishing Marxist education for the people, because of the growing interest in theory, and the increasing extent to which independent study is being carried on in every part of the United States. It is felt that the Consultation Service will prove of especially great value in connection with the study of the Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union shortly to be issued.

Commonwealth College Spring Term Starts Soon

MENA, Ark., March 20. — Resident classes will be resumed at Commonwealth College Monday, April 3, after a winter devoted to staff research for the purpose of re-adapting the curriculum to the changing labor scene.

Arrangements are being made for a capacity student body of 60. A number of scholarship subsidies have been assured and inquiries from prospective students are being received from all sections.

Approximately 1 per cent of the more than 4000 Americans who fought in Spain were Commonwealth alumni, and the school is interested in establishing scholarships in the names of those who died. Persons who would consider endowing memorial scholarships are urged to communicate with the college.

Commonwealth is the oldest and largest resident labor school in the country. The current year marks its fifteenth anniversary.

Courses in union methods, political economy, current history, public speaking, parliamentary law, civil liberties, labor drama and other subjects are devised to give basic training to prospective workers in the labor field in one quarter; but a nine month course is available.

Each student does 20 hours of industrial work every week. A \$60 fee covers his tuition, room, board and laundry service. The school is co-educational.

Interested students are invited to communicate with the Director, Commonwealth College, Mena, Arkansas.

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MAR 21 1939

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Bi

HEAR TALK ON SHARECROPPING

(Special to the Record)

CINCINNATI, O., April 21—

"Sharecropping—a form of hard exercise for the cropper and no other reward"—is the way Claude Williams, director of ~~Commonwealth College~~, summed up his description of the "economics" of peonage to an audience at the YVCA.

Williams spoke about the Southern Tenant Farmers Union which he said was in a transition stage, becoming "a real

APR 22 1939

INDEXED

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DAILY RECORD

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62-12299

Many individuals are of the opinion that criticism of the YWCA is unjust and uncalled for. However, if a father finds his son to be a consistent associate of "bootleggers" he is very much inclined to believe that his son is aiding said "bootleggers" in the distribution or consumption of their wares. This is a more or less natural conclusion. Therefore, when we find the YWCA consistently cooperating with organizations and individuals openly engaged in an attempt to convert our present so-called "capitalist" system into a system of "production for use and not for profit" (pure communism) and advocating a change in our system of government to coincide with the "new social order", the natural conclusion follows that they are not altogether out of sympathy with the radical program, and especially is this true when we find the YWCA buildings being used as meeting places by organizations advocating these revolutionary changes in society and government.

BUR. OF INVEST.
FEB 2 1928
DIVISION

[REDACTED] the Chicago Chapter of the League for Industrial Democracy held a dinner meeting at the Central YWCA headquarters, 59 E. Monroe Street, Chicago, Illinois. Norman Thomas was the guest and principal speaker.

[REDACTED] advocated a syndicalist program of worker control by which workers would elect their foremen, foremen elect superintendents, etc., etc. This was too radical for even Thomas who branded it as purely syndicalistic and unworkable.

[REDACTED] advocated the building of an eighteen story modern temple to "youth" that would contain every conceivable means of entertainment for the youth to attract them to a center where they could be socialized.

But it remained for [REDACTED] to offer a suggestion that was the climax of the meeting which was to the effect that every teacher belonging to the American Federation of Teachers in Chicago obtain the names and addresses of all students under them in the schools exhibiting liberal tendencies. These names then would be submitted to the Chicago Chapter of the L.I.D. as a mailing list for the circularization of socialist propaganda literature, and after this propaganda campaign had been carried on sufficiently long to thoroughly inculcate the recipients of the literature, organizers of the L.I.D. would approach them and induct them into the "League".

This suggestion was received with enthusiasm and referred to the executive committee for action.

The insidiousness of this program to penetrate the schools with their socialist program needs no further comment.

[REDACTED] addressed the National YWCA, a constituent organization of the Conference on the Cause and Cure of War, at a luncheon given under the auspices of the National Council for Prevention of War.

1928

62-12299-75

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DATE 10/25/82 BY SP4/ew/rpm

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FEB 3 1928 A.M.	
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
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The YWCA is consistently found in association with radical and pacifist groups, lending its aid by permitting these groups to use the YWCA premises in which to hold their meetings and, in many instances, we find YWCA secretaries providing lecture courses consisting entirely of speakers from radical and pacifist groups.

Therefore, we cannot help but feel that "where there is smoke, there is fire" and the YWCA could do well to "clean house" and eliminate the radical elements creeping into its organization and which will eventually lose for it the support its earlier splendid work entitled it to.

Recent press reports announce that the Soviet government has begun to sell government railway bond issues directly to American investors by mail and has arranged with the Chase National Bank of New York, the Amalgamated Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago and the Bank of Italy of San Francisco for the payment of interest and principle on these bonds in dollars.

The reports state that the sales of these bonds in the United States already run over a hundred thousand dollars. This is quite significant in view of the fact that Russia has no trade treaties or otherwise with the United States. Investors are investing in these Soviet securities at their own risk. This is in direct line with the Soviet program for forcing recognition of their government by the United States through American business men.

Junius B. Wood, in an article appearing in the January 21st issue of the Chicago Daily News, quotes the Moscow "Pravda" (of which Nikolai Bukharin, president of the Communist International, is editor) as follows:

"The Standard Oil company's attack on the Deterding interests is receiving the entire support of the bourgeois American newspapers because it is backed by the Rockefeller millions. Standard and Soviet oil on the Asiatic market means a great strengthening of the American oil trade on the world markets. Deterding charges that the Soviet oil is stolen, but this does not bother America, because American business does not usually operate on moral grounds." (Underscoring ours).

97492

b7C

[REDACTED]

The Amalgamated Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago has long been a depository of Soviet Russian funds for use in purchasing supplies in Chicago and at least one newspaper has refused to accept their advertisement for this reason.

Russia feels certain that they can attract billions of dollars of American capital to their country for the development of their almost unlimited natural resources. The reason for their confidence is expressed in the "Pravda" statement that "American business does not usually operate on moral grounds". In other words, the bolshevik leaders infer that many of our American capitalists will not hesitate at anything to extend their influence and pile up wealth for themselves. In encouraging the investment of millions of dollars of American money in Soviet concessions at this time, these "financial advisers" are endorsing a very ticklish proposition in view of the fact that Russia has concentrated on this country for recognition knowing that their very existence depends on receiving this recognition.

b7D

[REDACTED]

They have issued millions of dollars' worth of

-3-

paper money without an ounce of metal in the treasury to back up the issues. All of their available gold is being used for cash payment of supplies purchased in the United States and the American capitalists are grabbing at the bait held out to them in the form of valuable Russian concessions, minerals in particular, thus supplying the communist regime with the wherewithall to extend their program for world revolution. Millions of dollars are annually spent in the United States in propagandizing for Russian recognition.

The American Trading Corporation, the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce and the Soviet Union Information Bureau spend their entire time in issuing statistics on the "sound" (?) economic conditions of the Soviet government. Thousands of tourists have been entertained at the expense of the communist government this year for the purpose of converting them into propagandists for Russian recognition. Many of our representatives in Congress have been converted in favor of Russian recognition. Industrial corporations having Soviet concessions, in order to protect their investments, will undoubtedly bring pressure to bear upon the government for recognition of Russia which promises to be one of the issues during this term of Congress.

The Russian government is not stable and one of its chief lines of propaganda is that it has departed from communism and is rapidly adopting capitalist tactics, abandoning its program of world revolution.

This is the "false front" being used to blind our financial interests. While putting forth this front, the income derived from the capitalist investments in Russian concessions is being used to create an anti-American feeling in the Latin and Central American republics, in the Philippines, Haiti, Cuba, Virgin Islands, Hawaii and all other American possessions. The Communist Party and press in America is also being subsidized by money supplied by these "capitalist ventures" in the land of communism. One of the greatest dangers that we face from these activities in venturing into the forbidden territory, as it were, is a great war. Soviet Russia, when she has obtained billions of dollars of investments to put her natural resource industries on a sound operating basis, will more than likely (as was done before) ran all of the investors out of Soviet Russia and take possession of all equipment installed by foreign investors and then laugh at them and tell them to "try and collect". In this event there will be a great howl put up by American interests who have become heavily involved in Russian projects and the demand will be that the United States government protect capital investments in Russia.

The recent breaking off of trade relations with Russia by England, and the general turmoil in all European countries that can be directly traced back to Soviet Russia, should be sufficient warning to this country to repudiate any program of recognition of Russia at this time.

"A prophet is without honor in his own country" and our analysis will more than likely be received on just that basis. Nevertheless, we feel that the warning should be issued and be given due consideration by every reader of this bulletin so that a united effort may be made to bring pressure to bear to offset the influences at work to bring about recognition of Soviet Russia in Congress.

F 97493

We now have with us the "American Committee on Information About the Soviet Union". It cannot as yet be definitely proved that this is the product of the fertile brains of the communists, but we feel no hesitancy in saying that even though it may not be a division of the Workers (Communist) Party of America, its purposes are so identical that we are minded to exclaim "What's in a name?"

The January 27th issue of "The Y Worker" announces "Brophy to Talk on Soviet Union" under the auspices of "American Committee" at Carmen's Hall, Chicago, Illinois, on February 17th. Speakers are listed as John Brophy, (who was the communist candidate for president of the United Mine Workers and who since his return from Russia with the repudiated "American Trade Union Delegation" has been featured at communist meetings) speaking in behalf of Russian recognition; Peter Jensen, another member of the delegation who is a railroad machinist; Lillian Herstein of the Chicago Federation of Teachers, also of the "delegation"; Prof. Paul Douglas, an ardent propagandist for Russia, also a "delegation" member, and Carl Haessler, of the Federated Press (communist news-gathering agency) who has been in Russia getting his instructions from the high priests of communism.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] b7c

Of course this committee does not want to endorse communism. If they do want to bring the facts(?) about the Soviet government before the American public. It is significant that this is incidentally what the communists are striving with might and main to do at this time, viz: bring the facts(?) about Soviet Russia before the American public.

It should be of particular interest to note that [REDACTED] of the Chicago schools is one of these open propagandists for Soviet Russia and communism. Parents should "appreciate" having their children subjected to these influences in public schools.

The "Commonwealth College Fortnightly" of January 15, 1928, (official bulletin of Commonwealth College at Mena, Ark.) is headed as follows:

"Commonwealth May Close May 1.
Promised Funds are Unavailable."

97494

The article then states that "the American Fund for Public Service (Garland Fund) has refused to release allocations made several years ago and the school finds itself unable to complete the capital equipment which will make it self-supporting. With the present equipment, Commonwealth runs a deficit of \$2500 a year".

"Shortly after Commonwealth moved to its present location in 1925, the American Fund for Public Service sent Clinton Golden to investigate the institution. As a result of his investigation, the Fund allocated funds on a budget which was to meet the expense of completing the plant. The Commoners accepted this plan in good faith and went to work. From that time until May, 1926, the Fund supplied money for buildings and maintenance equipment. The budget provided for the building of a dam on Mill Creek and the installation of a power plant and workshop. With this equipment the school could have earned its own way. But when Commonwealth asked for the sum set aside for the hydro-electric plant, which was the very heart of the industrial plant for self-support, the Fund refused to release it. No reason was given for the refusal."

This would indicate that the reports prevalent during 1927 that the Garland Fund was exhausted, were true. Apparently the Garland Fund has been unable to collect large loans that have been outstanding and as a result are unable to fulfill their obligation to Commonwealth College.

This is indeed good news and if the College is unable to raise the necessary finances to complete their plant, the country will be well rid of one more radical stronghold where some of the faculty are openly I.W.W.

Mena Labor College Fined For 'Anarchy'

Vicious Court Action Arouses Protest in Arkansas

MENA, Ark., Sept. 27.—All friends of labor were called upon today to come to the assistance of Commonwealth College, now under attack by Southern bourgeois and reactionaries, by Nathan Oser, director of the school, when it was made known that the college had been fined \$2,500 on an "anarchy" charge, to be paid within the next ten days. If an appeal to the circuit court is not made within ten days, Justice Clem Brown of the Justice of Peace Court will be free to issue an attachment on school property.

Fined on the three counts of "anarchy," on charges of failure to display the American flag and illegal display of hammer and sickle, which has been on the flag for 17 years, the college has been attacked for the past few months by the worst reactionaries in the state.

The fine was imposed "in absentia" after Nathan Oser, his assistant, Kenneth B. Balbridge, and their attorney, C. A. Stanfield, walked out of the court when they were refused a motion for a change of venue.

Director Oser is out on \$1,000 bail and has received several threats of vigilante violence. A defense fund has been set up to fight this reactionary attack. A wire campaign to Governor Bailey has been started, protesting this assault on the civil rights of labor and educators in the South.

*X Election
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*Commonwealth Party -
new York*

X Daily Worker

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INDEXED

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March 20, 1934

1933 has been a spectacular year at Commonwealth College, but it has been a year of steady progress. The work of the school, academic and industrial, has been improved. Enrollment for the year was about average, altho it has become increasingly difficult for working class students to raise the relatively low tuition fee.

Increased efficiency in industrial work has been brought about partly by additions to plant and equipment. A new barn was built, new tools and implements purchased; pigs, horses, hayrack, etc., were bought. The farm was greatly improved, and the school now has more acres under cultivation than ever before. The financial report for the year showed that the farm furnished 57 per cent of the food consumed by the group, as against 50 per cent for 1932.

The financial situation of the school changed very little, if at all during the year. Commonwealth has always operated on a small cash budget; and this amount was raised no more easily in 1933 than in previous years. It is interesting to note, however, that whereas tuitions in 1932 were 55 per cent of the total income, tuitions in 1933 were only 40 per cent of the total. In 1932 donations made up 30 per cent of the income; in 1933 donations made up 47 per cent.

The personnel of the faculty has remained practically unchanged for the past three years, and these teachers have, of course, increased their efficiency. As African students and students of the current situation, they have shown steady leftward progress, and as the labor atmosphere of the school.

The curriculum has been improved from year to year, and a constant effort is made to adapt the training at Commonwealth to the needs of active workers in the movement. The aim is to give the student not only a theoretical background but to add as much as possible to his actual knowledge. Commonwealth classes are not open forums, wherein conflicting points of view are given an equal opportunity. The class struggle is taken for granted. Liberalism is ruled out. The teacher takes his stand on the side of the working class. Material is interpreted from the point of view of scientific socialism.

An unflinching effort is made to imbue each student with the notion that radical activity is the only activity now-a-days worth his consideration and that in the labor movement he will find ample outlet for all his energies and sufficient opportunity to exercise whatever talents he may have or can develop. In other words, Commonwealth aims to train professional revolutionists.

Partly because of our location and partly because of the type of student we get, political work receives the greatest emphasis, altho trade-union organization, cultural work, educational work, etc., are not neglected.

Labor drama has had considerable attention at Commonwealth. Short labor plays and skits are frequently presented at the school. Commonwealth teachers and students have written a number of these short plays, suitable for presentation by working-class groups, and during the past two years, there have been at least two hundred presentations in various parts of the nation, of these plays.

Commonwealth keeps in close touch with the labor movement, even though the school is situated in the Ozark Mountains, far from industrial centers. During 1933 a delegation went from the school to Corinth, Miss., and there attempted to organize the workers of a clothing mill. Members of the delegation were threatened with death and finally were escorted out of town by a mob of several hundred armed thugs hired by the mill owner.

Commonwealth sent delegations to the "Free Tom Mooney" conference in Chicago. The U.S. Congress against War in New York, the Continental Congress in Washington, and the 2nd National Farmers' Relief Conference in Chicago.

Because Commonwealth is situated in a "lily-white" county in Western Kansas, it has heretofore been impossible to invite negro students to attend. In an attempt to break the race prejudice of the residents of this county, and perhaps to do something toward breaking down this prejudice, Commonwealth has been attempting for two years to induce some prominent negro to visit the school and make a talk to the student body. As far as the college has been unable to find a negro speaker willing to take the risk. Arrangements have been made recently, however, for a negro speaker to visit Commonwealth some time soon, and it is unlikely that members of the group will again be disappointed.

Commonwealth teachers have been active in organizing the farmers in the immediate vicinity of the school. A Commonwealth teacher formed the first "holiday" local in the

State. When the Farmers' National Committee for Action was organized, this local and others that had been organized in the neighborhood, joined into a county Farmers' Proletarian League. The farmer of this county, now a Commonwealth student, has been and is a member of the Farmers' National Committee for Action. He is also state secretary of the F.F.A.

The non-factional position of the school has been the source of internal difficulties in the past, but during 1933 the various factional organizations on the campus got along quite well with each other and with the management. Both the Communist and Socialist parties have organized groups on the campus, the Communist groups having a larger membership. The CPUSA, NW, Proletarian Party and others have been represented in the student group also during 1933. There have been, of course, heated discussions and arguments that never cease, but factional strife has created very little personal animosity. We have no assurance, obviously, that factional peace will always prevail — that the school will never again be torn by political disagreement, but at the present time, the factional problem is not acute. Although the administrative problem is increased by the presence of so many factional groups, yet the educational advantages that flow from the conflict of their various viewpoints cannot be overestimated, and the advantages easily outweigh the disadvantages.

The composition of the Commonwealth student body is changing slowly, with changed economic conditions on the outside. During the entire NINEY history of Commonwealth, unskilled workers have made up about 36 per cent of the student body. During 1933 this percentage rose to more than 42 per cent. Skilled workers have been in the past, 34 per cent; in 1933, 25 per cent. The percentage of farm boys and girls shows a drop from nearly 11 percent for all time to 5 per cent for 1933.

This decrease in the number of students from the farm must be accounted for by the increased impoverished condition of the American farmer, since Commonwealth has much better contacts now in the Middle West than ever before in history.

The center of population for Commonwealth students is moving steadily west; that is, we draw more students from the middle west now than we did five years ago.

Commonwealth students now have more formal schooling than they had in the past. During ten years that the school has been in operation, approximately 17 per cent of the students have had only an eighth grade education. In 1933 fewer than 9 per cent had stopped with the eighth grade. For all time, 40 per cent have dropped out of school with a high school diploma. This percentage is 41 per cent for 1933. Thirty per cent of all Commonwealth students have had college degrees when they enrolled at Commonwealth. Thirty-seven per cent of the 1933 students had degrees.

From July 3 to Sept. 3, 1933, Commonwealth had its second summer session. Carl Hessler, managing editor of *Federated Press*; Oscar Ameringer, editor of the *American Guardian*; Carl Brannin, co-founder of the Seattle Unemployed Citizens' League; and Nathan Fine, director of the Research Dept. of the New School of Social Science, were here as special lecturers.

The Commonwealth summer session enables persons of limited means who are interested in the labor movement and in working class culture to have a pleasant and profitable vacation in the Puget hills. The rates are lower than those of any other resort or camp, and the vacationer has an opportunity of hearing the talks of these special lecturers and of listening in as well on the Commonwealth classes in Marxism, proletarian literature, labor problems, etc. Most of the inter-course are reported during the summer session for the regular students who attend.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C.

February 27, 1937.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

Mr. Tolson	
Mr. Baughman	
Mr. Clegg	
Mr. Coffey	
Mr. Dawsey	
Mr. Egan	
Mr. Foxworth	
Mr. Glavin	
Mr. Harbo	
Mr. Joseph	
Mr. Lester	
Mr. Nichols	
Mr. Quinn	
Mr. Schilder	✓
Mr. Tamm	✓
Mr. Tracy	
Miss Gandy	

At a meeting of the District Department AFGE last evening at the Hamilton Hotel Lucien Koch, former Director of Commonwealth College, Mena, Arkansas, was denied for the third time a seat as a delegate of Labor Lodge #12 by vote of 37 to 37. Mr. Koch is employed as an economist in the Department of Labor.

Lodges voting with Labor Lodge #12 were #3, #31, #35, #53, #129, #153 and #200. Koch denied being a Communist. When asked whether he believed in the American form of government he stated "I believe in the possibilities of America". He also stated that he attended the University of Wisconsin prior to going to Arkansas and that he was a member of the faculty in Wisconsin.

With reference to this matter, Liberty Magazine recently published an article concerning Commonwealth College and the statement was made by Mr. Ports that the American Federation of Labor executive council is now considering a petition to investigate Liberty as being unfair to organized labor.

Mr. Koch's defense included the statement that the Arkansas Joint Legislative Committee of the Arkansas General Assembly did not report the hearings correctly or truthfully. During a talk by Mr. Custer he observed that this statement by Mr. Koch was a reflection upon the honesty and integrity of Majority Leader Joe Robinson and Senator Caraway from Arkansas, as well as other prominent political representatives of that State. Koch was very evasive in his answers to questions and attempted to mislead the gathering by indicating that not only was the transcript not truthful but that the manner of the inquiry was unfair and hostile, a typical radical defense.

Copies of the evidence against Commonwealth College, consisting of a condensed transcript of the testimony, were distributed to those present. A copy of this release is attached.

RECORDED & INDEXED

Respectfully,

61-2551-102	
FEB 28 1937	
INVESTIGATION	
JAN 19 1937	
JUSTICE	
FILE	

THE EVIDENCE
Against

COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE

Near Mena, Arkansas

TRANSCRIPT OF THE TESTIMONY

(Condensed)

Taken Before The

JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE

ARKANSAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

February-March, 1935

WITH ITS REPORT THEREON

61-7557-108

FOREWORD

The investigation of Commonwealth College by a joint committee of the Arkansas Legislature was brought about by a widespread demand to learn whether that institution is being used for the teaching of atheism, free love, and communism. Also whether complete social equality of blacks with whites was being advocated.

The question as to atheism was quickly answered. Lucien Koch, head of the college, and the other teachers swore that they did not believe in God. One teacher impudently asked the Committee - "What is God?"

However, all of these teachers took without objection the oath as witness to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, SO HELP ME GOD." From these two things their creditability may well be judged.

The answer to the question as to free love practiced is to be found in testimony covering ten years of the existence of the college. It begins with the testimony of a deputy sheriff at Mena who swore to making the arrests of two of the men students and the detaining of their women, also students. He said he found these four sleeping in a large room with more than a dozen other couples. These couples were paired off on pallets and were in their night clothes.

A neighbor, a farmer, swore that during the summer of 1934 he saw men and girl students of the college swimming naked in a creek adjoining the college and that, afterward, he saw them having intercourse naked on the bank of the creek.

The testimony was to the effect that during these ten years, in fact, from the start of the college, Lucien Koch was a student there.

There was much testimony as to the activities of members of Commonwealth College in aiding joint organizations of blacks and whites, in which negroes were among the officers and whose meetings were held in negro churches.

The testimony is voluminous that communism is being taught in the college by many teachers. However, all these teachers insisted that they did not espouse, but only expounded it. They are like physicians who would expose a well person to smallpox and then watch, with "intellectual curiosity" to see whether it took.

And testimony is to the effect that it did take. One sister swore to the effect of it on two of her brothers, both going there as "ordinary country boys" and coming out confirmed atheists and communists. The older brother brought a woman student, with whom he had been living at Commonwealth, to his sister's home.

The younger brother, a boy of fourteen, was first shocked at the "living together" of the men and women students, "then pitied, then embraced it." He came back a confirmed radical, atheist and a believer in complete racial equality, social, political and economical.

Special attention is called to the statement of Lucien Koch (p.5) regarding the preparations at Commonwealth College "To build revolutionary students' and teachers' organizations in the colleges of the State of Arkansas."

The joint committee reported unanimously that, while they could find no positive testimony that the overthrow of the government by force and violence was actually being advocated at Commonwealth College (the teachers positively denying that such is the case), "their militant actions in fostering and agitating dissension by strikes and otherwise over the state are extremely radical and close to the border line."

They recommended that a close check be kept hereafter on the manner in which the principles they advocate are urged to be put into effect by the people, and if such teaching and principles tend to incite the people to throw the present constituted government through violence and force, or may reasonably be expected to cause blood shed, that they be prosecuted under the present criminal laws now in effect.

EXCERPTS

FROM THE TESTIMONY TAKEN BEFORE THE JOINT INVESTIGATING
COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF THE ARKANSAS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1931

COMMITTEE

Representatives: Marcus Miller, Chairman
John G. Rye
Minor Milwee

Senators: J. L. Shaver
Clyde Ellis

TESTIMONY OF LUCIEN KOCH, Director (President) of Commonwealth
College.

Lucien Koch, 27 years of age, a resident of Mena, Arkansas c/o Commonwealth
College. *****

- Q. Did you teach any subjects in the University of Wisconsin?
A. I taught Greek Sociology. I specialized in the social and political
and economical problems of Greek faction. *****
- Q. Who founded the Commonwealth College in Louisiana?
A. There were three people primarily responsible for the founding of
Commonwealth, the person providing most of the initiative was Dr.
W. E. Zeuch, and associate founders were Kate Richards O'Hare, now
named Mrs. Kathleen Cunningham, and the third person was Harold
V. Brown. They were responsible for organizing the school and con-
tacting the other teachers and getting the students. *****
- Q. Where is Dr. Zeuch?
A. Dr. Zeuch is now chief of the Planning Division of the Subsistence Home-
stead of the Department of Interior in Washington, one of the "Brain
Trusts". *****
- Q. Where is Kate Richards O'Hare, known as Mrs. Kathleen Cunningham?
A. Now living in California, and the last I knew was living in Pasadena. *****
- Q. Did Dr. Zeuch break with the College here at Mena?
A. No, he continued his connection with the college when it moved to Mena,
and served as the director up to July, 1931. *****
- Q. Then what position did he take after that?
A. At that time he left on a Guggenheim Fellowship for Europe and that
marked his permanent break with the Commonwealth College.
- Q. Then, I want to know if there was a difference of opinion with reference
to Commonwealth College and if so what was the difference that caused
the break?
A. Dr. Zeuch was forced out of the Commonwealth College Association because
there were differences between himself and the other members of Common-
wealth Association. The major difference of opinion was Zeuch's in-
ability to work with other people. This caused the other members to
come dissatisfied and to act in such a manner as to sever completely
connections with the school. *****
- Q. Now, what is signified by the use of the name of Commonwealth College?
How did it get its name?
A. I don't know just who proposed this name, or how this name of "Commonwealth"
was accepted. I presume the three people I named decided upon this name.
I am not sure of the significance that the three had in their mind, but
probably it worked toward a greater equality in the distribution of our
National wealth.

Q. Now your college is located in _____ direction from Menz, where and how far?

A. It is located on the Tallihine Highway, which I believe is West of Menz about eleven miles from Menz. ****

Q. How many acres of land do you have out there?

A. 320. ***

Q. And how many buildings do you have?

A. Approximately two dozen, including dormitories, library, classrooms, laundry, kitchen, Commonwealth store, et cetera. ****

Q. Is the plant fully paid for?

A. Yes, there is no indebtedness on our plant. ***

Q. Would you state the organizations contributing to the school?

A. The large grant, I believe, approximately \$27,000.00 came from the "Fund for Public Service" with offices in New York City; Carnegie Fund of New York contributed \$5,000.00, and several contributions were made by Mrs. Leonard Elmhurst Committee. Contributions were also forthcoming from several local and national trade Unions. ***

Q. Please name them.

A. International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, Hoziery Workers Union, Amalgamation Cotton Workers of America. There are others too, but I do not recall them right now. I might also say that contributions have been made by the Workmen's Circle. ****

Q. Were there any contributions by your school by what is known as the Garland Fund?

A. The "Garland Fund" is "The Fund for Public Service." ****

Q. When and how much?

A. I stated previously that we received approximately \$27,000.00, I believe in the year 1925. We could check on this. We are receiving from the "Fund for Public Service" \$500.00 this year. ****

Q. How many students are there at Commonwealth at this time?

A. Around 30, which includes tuition paying students, and maintenance students. ****

Q. I notice that there is only one student in your college from Arkansas.

A. Yes, that would be James Fulks. We have another student that is omitted from this list, that is Isabella Carson from Arkansas. ****

Q. Are any of these students financed by any organizations that contribute to your college?

A. Yes. ****

Q. Will you please take this list and state the name of the organizations that are sending these students to college and what compensation they are contributing toward the education of this student?

A. I cannot answer that in detail, but the Federal Emergency Relief Association is financing four scholarships at Commonwealth College. Some scholarships are being provided by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. These are organizations as I recall them. ***

Q. Are you a member of any church?

A. I was brought up in the Presbyterian Church, but at present time I do not consider myself a member of any church, although I sometimes attend church when I consider the lecturer has something interesting to say. ****

Q. Why did you quit the Presbyterian Church?

A. I did not simply quit the Presbyterian Church, it was a gradual development during which time my interest in attending church was substituted by other and more compelling interests. ****

Q. Do you believe in the Bible?

A. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the Bible to state whether or not I believe in the Bible. I believe, however, I would have many disagreements with passages contained in the Bible. ****

Q. Do you believe in the Bible?
A. I am interested in the Bible as a social document. *****

Q. Do you believe in a God?
A. No. ***

Q. You do not believe in a God?
A. I am giving my personal opinion and I am not representing the position of the school. *****

Q. To get a further background, may I ask do you believe in the Constitution of the United States?

A. I am convinced that I believe in it more thoroughly than the planters of the Eastern part of Arkansas. *****

Q. Do you believe in the American form of government?

A. I believe in the American form of government in so far as the will of the people is compatible with it. *****

Q. Do you respect the American Flag?

A. I refuse to answer because I consider it as having no bearing on the investigation. I refuse to answer without advice of counsel. 20

Q. Do you teach in that college that there is no God?

A. No.

Q. Do you have any religious service on the campus?

A. No. *****

Q. Do you teach that there is a God at your school?

A. No. And I would like to make here the explanation that the school considers religion purely a matter for every individual to handle as he sees fit. There are, I understand, thirteen denominational churches in the city of Mena, there are also many country churches; any one interested is free to attend and sometime do attend those churches. ****

Q. Do you solicit funds for the college?

A. Yes. ****

Q. How many teachers do you have at your college?

A. At the present time, I believe between eight and ten. I can give you an exact figure if you want me to check on that.

Q. Suppose you read into the record a list of the teachers, their homes and where they were born, and the subjects they teach.

A. I cannot give you all of the information off hand, but I will give all the information I have at the present time and will give additional information.

William Cunningham, born in Oklahoma, teaches economics and writing.

Mildred Price, born in North Carolina, teaches Current events and directs the Orientation Course.

Henry Black, born in Illinois, teaches course in freedom and Social Revolution.

Charlotte Moskowitz, born in New York, teaches typing.

Clarence Cunningham, born in Oklahoma, teaches shorthand.

Rose Brown, I don't know what state in the United States she was born, teaches English and Effective Writing.

Bob Brown, born in Illinois, teaches Creative Writing.

Marvin Sanford, I believe born in California, teaches Journalism.

Carl Parker, I don't know what state in which he was born, teaches Farm Problems and Farm Work.

Raymond Koch, born in Oregon, who is now on leave, teaches Social Psychology.

Lucien Koch, born in Oregon, teaches Labor History and Problems and teaches Public Speaking.

That makes a total of eleven, I believe, I think that is all.

Q. How much do these teachers receive as pay for their services?

A. They receive no salary. They get only their bare maintenance, including room, board, laundry and other minimum necessities.

Q. Well, how is it that these teachers will come from other parts of the United States and teach for just their sustenance?
A. Because they are interested in the type of experimental education Commonwealth is conducting, and because they are vitally interested in rural education. Their reward is their interest in the work that they do.

Q. Is your school primarily a school for labor problems?

A. No. Our subjects include a field of the social study. Of course, labor problems is one interesting aspect of that entire field. ***

Q. Do you believe in Communism?

A. I have an intellectual curiosity towards Communism, as I have an intellectual curiosity towards all other opinions including Capitalism, Facism, et cetera. ****

Q. Do you believe in Capitalism?

A. I do not believe in Capitalism, as it is now operated. *****

Q. Do you teach as a principle in your school Communism?

A. Just what do you mean by Communism? Do you mean do we present the position of the Communistic Party?

Q. Yes.

A. We present the position of the Communistic Party, along with the positions of all other political organizations, including the Republic and Democratic Parties. In other words, Commonwealth is a cross-section of free speech, public opinion and free public discussion. We believe in the fearless pursuit of this truth arrived at on the basis of all evidence available. *****

Q. Do you present the theory of Capitalism in your school?

A. We do. *****

Q. Do you believe in Capitalism, as you understand it?

A. I do not. ****

Q. What is Communism?

A. Communism is a philosophy or a school of thought which had its origin with the rise of Karl Marx.

Q. Is that your answer?

A. Yes, is that satisfactory?

Q. It is not. Would you care to elucidate on your personal view of Communism with reference to social equality, with reference to the downfall of Capitalism? As to ownership of property?

A. Communism is an indefinite term, therefore, I think it will be more helpful to shift the discussion to the Communistic Party. It believes in social and economic equality. It believes in the downfall of Capitalism, and in the establishment of workers Union. I am not a member of the Communistic Party, but I am very much interested in its program and in its position, as I am interested in all other political organizations. *****

Q. Have you ever voted?

A. I have not.

Question. Do you own any property individually, and do you believe in the individual ownership of property?

A. I own very little property individually. I believe that the time has come there there must be more collective ownership of property for our civilization to be preserved and further developed.

Q. And who would be the collective individuals owning the property?

A. The people.

Q. How would you establish a collective ownership of property, and what people do you have reference to when you say the "people"?

A. I have no personal belief as to how the establishment of collective ownership of property should be established. The "people" I mean the people who produce wealth in the first place.

Q. Do you mean by the people who produce the wealth the working class of people?

A. I mean all production workers, whether they work manually or

Q. Does your college what is known as the Commonwealth College Fortnightly?

A. It does.

Q. Is that an official paper of your college?

A. It is. *****

Q. What circulation does this paper have in regard to number?

A. Approximately six thousand. ****

Does the college teach or advocate social, political and economical equality of whites and negroes?

A. My answer to that question also is that different points of view are presented; there is no unified opinion on that matter. This I know from listening to discussions on the campus.

Q. Were the things contained in the statement "Delegation back with Lynch Rope" written by you while in jail at Lepanto?

A. With the exception of a few revisions, it is a letter which I sent to the college while in the Lepanto jail.

Q. Is that statement in the main true?

A. It is.

Q. Now you stated that three members of the college were sent to Eastern Arkansas to assist the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, did you not, and in the same issue of February 15th, 1935, in which was the letter written by you has, among other things the following: "The meeting was arranged in a church-house by a Negro organizer (one of the outstanding courageous Negro leaders. (Names must be omitted) Two double barreled shotguns and a revolver are in his room. He is ready to lay his life if the Negroes and whites remain united.") Did you write that statement and is that statement true?

A. I wrote that statement and I believe that statement is true. There is nothing unlawful in the possession of firearms. I wish to add in addition that the Southern Tenant Farmers Union is not interested in the labor problems, it is interested in the economic problems. It realizes that there are both negro and white cotton workers, and that both suffer from the same exploitation, therefore their problem is a common one and must be met in common. Unless it is met in common, I believe, on the basis of my acquaintance with the situation, serious trouble is apt to develop there. The Union, and I personally am very much interested in preventing any violence and loss of life. In so far as violence has so far occurred in Eastern Arkansas, it has been precipitated by the planters, their agents and hired thugs.

Q. Would you resort to violence in order to carry out the principles of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union?

A. If the principles of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union are carried out there can be no violence. Violence, if it comes, can only come from the planters, their agents, and hired thugs.

Q. Do you have a Socialist faction in your college?

A. We do.

Q. Do you have a Communist faction in your college?

A. We do.

Q. What daily papers does your college take there in its library, so far as current papers are concerned?

A. I don't know if I remember all of them. I do know we take the Memphis Star, we have just subscribed to the Arkansas Gazette. We receive the Press Scimitar (Memphis), we receive the Daily Worker, the St. Louis Post Dispatch and the New York Times.